UNITED NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.85/L.71
24 July 1992

ENGLISH ONLY

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 25 August-3 September 1992
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE FIFTH CONFERENCE

Report of Japan

Paper submitted by Japan**

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* E/CONF.85/1/Rev.1.

** Prepared by the Government of Japan.

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1. The present state of the standardization of geographical names and corresponding activities in Japan since the Fifth United Nations Conference is described below.

Standardization of domestic names

2. No single central agency exists in Japan which is responsible for collecting, registering and standardizing geographical names. Several agencies and organizations share the responsibility in their respective fields, and have cooperated to standardize geographical names.

3. Names of administrative divisions and settlements are stipulated in appropriate laws and regulations. No effort to collect and standardize them again is necessary, because there is no conflict in spelling, pronunciation or their applications to appropriate areas. Therefore, greater efforts have been given to standardizing the names of natural features and conventional place-names.

4. The Geographical Survey Institute and the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency, the agencies responsible for mapping, have collected geographical names to be entered on their maps and charts. In order to unify geographical names used by the two agencies, the Joint Committee on the Standardization of Georgraphical Names was established in 1960 and meets once or twice a year. Since the Fifth Conference, the names already standardized have been reviewed in the Joint Committee.

Names of undersea features

5. Undersea features discovered and surveyed by Japanese agencies have been named officially by the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency after deliberation by the Assembly on Geographical Names of Oceans and Undersea Features, the members of which are marine scientists and agencies associated with ocean survey and research.

6. Standardization of undersea feature names, a publication compiled by the GEBCO Subcommittee on Geographical Names and Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features and the Working Group on Maritime and Undersea Features of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, is being used as a standard for the deliberations.

7. Since the Fifth Conference, 379 names (seamounts: 129; knolls: 42; canyons: 50; basins: 4; miscellaneous: 154) have been adopted and the total number of names at present is 1,059.

Antarctic geographical names

8. The naming of newly discovered or observed natural features and important places by the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition is promoted by the National Institute of Polar Research.

9. The director of the Institute, seeking counsel from the Antarctic Place-Names Committee of Japan, makes out a draft of the new names. On the basis of proposed names, new names are adopted at the general convention of the headquarters of the Japanese Antarctic Research Expedition.

10. Since the Fifth Conference, 15 names have been adopted and the total number of names is now 291.

Romanization of geographical names

11. No particular progress has been made on the romanization system in Japan since the Fifth Conference.

12. The Roman spelling of Japanese is usually done using two systems of romanization: "Kunrei Siki", which is slightly modified from "Nihon Siki" (the Japanese system); and "Syûsei Hebon Siki" (the Modified Hepburn system). Both have been used widely for a long time.

13. The geographical names used on Japanese official maps and charts for international use are spelled by the Kunrei Siki system. In special cases, except on national base maps, other systems (of Syûsei Hebon Siki and Nihon Siki) are also used.

Toponymic data file

14. Since the Fifth Conference, the Geographical Survey Institute has been constructing a data file containing about 120,000 geographical names. It will be completed in 1992.